



Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers January 17, 2008

Study Finds Cell Phones Lead to Slower Traffic

Drivers who use cell phones—even hands-free—take longer to get to their destination because they drive slower on highways and are more reluctant to pass slower-moving traffic. “The average person’s commute is longer because of that person who is on the cell phone right in front of them,” said the leader of the University of Utah research team that will present the study’s findings at the Transportation Research Board’s annual meeting Jan. 16. Participants in the new study used a driving simulator to test cell-phone use in realistic traffic scenarios. Because cell-phone users took about 3 percent longer to finish the same route and about one in 10 drivers on the road uses a phone, the time lost can add up. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety cautions that what happens in simulators might not occur in the real world. For more information, go to <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/22472921/>

Sources: LiveScience and Associated Press, January 2, 2007

Journal Article Compares Traits of Distracted, Aggressive Drivers

Recent research investigates the human element in aggressive and distracted driving by identifying personality traits of these drivers. A survey of college students suggests that there are some similarities, but also differences, between aggressive and distracted drivers. Researchers identified some strategies for developing communications to reduce both types of driving misbehavior.

NIST Measures Performance Of Auto Crash Warning Systems

Engineers at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) have developed and tested a laser-based ranging system to assess the performance of automobile collision warning systems. Researchers in industry and at the U.S. Department of Transportation will be able to use the NIST technology to accelerate the development and commercialization of safety systems that alert drivers to multiple, and sometimes virtually simultaneous potential crash hazards—both from forward or side collisions as well as from running off the road. DOT believes that such warning systems could reduce substantially the number and severity of injuries to motorists and save lives. Preliminary tests of prototype collision detection systems with the NIST technology have revealed both potential benefits of the systems and areas that need improvement.

Increased Fuel Standards Will Mean Lighter Cars

Makers of aluminum, carbon fiber and other lightweight materials stand to get a bigger share of the auto-industry pie when tougher fuel-economy standards go into effect. The energy bill President Bush signed will force automakers to build lighter cars, which is bad news for the steel industry. Consumers will also pay more for new vehicles, but the increase will be offset somewhat by savings in fuel.

Source: Automotive Fleet, December 27, 2007

Executive Summary of Traffic Safety Culture Designed To Expand Discussion

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety released an executive summary of an earlier report called “Improving Traffic Safety Culture in the United States: The Journey Forward.” This compendium of



papers addresses "traffic safety culture" from a variety of perspectives. For more information, go to <http://www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/SafetyCultureSummaryAndSynthesis.pdf>

NSWMA to Run Radio Ads for Slow Down to Get Around Campaign

The National Solid Wastes Management Association (NSWMA) will run radio ads in 10 cities soon as part of their Slow Down to Get Around campaign. This campaign urges motorists to drive more slowly and cautiously around garbage trucks. The ads are being run during morning drive time (6-10 am) because NSWMA's analysis suggests that the majority of incidents in which motorists crash into sanitation workers and garbage trucks occur during that time period, when residential collection is taking place and motorists are often rushing to work, sometimes in the dark. The ads are being run in medium-sized cities because NSWMA's analysis suggests the majority of these accidents occur in these types of locations. The NSWMA radio ad can be heard at www.nswma.org.

State Rejects High-Tech Devices to Fight Wrong-Way Drivers

The Ohio Department of Transportation has ruled out high-tech methods being studied elsewhere to stop wrong-way drivers on interstates. A Michigan man who police say was drunk and driving the wrong way is charged with killing five people in a crash on I-280 in Toledo on Dec. 30. An ODOT spokeswoman said, "There's not much that can stop a driver with a blood-alcohol level more than three times the legal limit, as police say was the case with Michael Gagnon. Other states are looking at systems that could stall such vehicles or blow out tires. Washington State is considering using sensors that would flip on warning signs if wrong-way vehicles are detected.

Source: Akron Beacon Journal, January 10, 2008

Idaho Stations Cameras on Highways To Keep Workers, Drivers Informed

To help motorists and road workers learn of traffic problems and driving conditions, the Idaho Department of Transportation increased the number of Webcams on the state's roads this summer. The department's Web site hosts video from 40 Webcams and lists travel information such as construction delays and mountain pass conditions. Most of Idaho's highways should have cameras by mid to late 2008. The Washington State Department of Transportation already has many cameras across the state. For more information, go to http://www.magicvalley.com/articles/2008/01/03/news/local_state/127949.txt

Source: The Associated Press, January 3, 2008

Oregon Specialty Plate Promotes Sharing Road with Bicycles

The Oregon Legislature approved a new "Share the Road" license plate to promote traffic safety. The plate debuted on Jan. 2 and is meant to encourage drivers and cyclists to be careful around each other. The specialty plates cost an additional \$10 over the regular license fee. "I think anything that brings accountability and consciousness to people who are in their cars or even just taking part on the road (is good)," a cyclist said. Oregon is the 12th state with a bicycle plate and must sell 500 a year to remain available. For more information, go to <http://www.kval.com/news/12904532.html> and http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/DMV/news/nr_20071213_2.shtml

Source: KVAL TV 13, December 28, 2007



Motorcycle Patrol Serves as Face of Traffic Safety for Illinois State Police

Illinois State Police's motorcycle enforcement bureau not only catches drivers for unsafe behaviors, but also serves a public relations and community building function. "Everywhere we go, we get thumbs up," said the lieutenant who oversees the bureau of 34 troopers. "It's impossible to stop and fuel your motorcycle without somebody coming over and talking to you about motorcycle patrol and what you're doing." Since the bureau rolled out in June 2005, troopers have written 70,000 traffic tickets and plan to roll out more educational programs this year. An emphasis on novice riders and alerting other motorists to share the road could help cut down on rise in motorcycle fatalities. The Illinois Department of Transportation covers the bureau's \$335,000 annual budget. For more information, go to <http://www.sj-r.com/News/stories/22911.asp>

Source: The State Journal-Register, January 2, 2008

Earlier Commute Times Push Businesses To Make Changes

Drivers in Southern California are waking up earlier to avoid congestion on their way to work. One in seven Los Angeles County commuters, or 4.2 million, leaves the house before 6 a.m., up 14 percent from seven years ago. The increase in early commuters shows workers trying to keep pace with other time zones and area industries that do not keep regular business hours. As more drivers hit the road early, the roads become more clogged in the pre-dawn hours and push people to leave even earlier. Some businesses, such as grocery stores and fast-food restaurants, are opening their doors early to cater to this crowd. Employers might also find themselves offering telecommuting options to help workers cope with congestion problems.

Source: Los Angeles Daily News, December 31, 2007

News from USDOT

FMCSA Partners with Racing Legend Rusty Wallace to Encourage Safety Belt Use Among Truckers

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has created a public service announcement (PSA) featuring former NASCAR driver Rusty Wallace, currently an analyst for ESPN and ABC Sports, who reminds truckers that they have a responsibility to drive safely and buckle up. The PSA, "Be Ready. Be Buckled." is aimed at increasing the number of truckers who regularly use a safety belt. "This ad reminds truckers that, as professional drivers, they are responsible for handling their vehicles and themselves in the safest manner possible," FMCSA Administrator John H. Hill said. Copies of the Rusty Wallace PSA and a poster can be viewed and ordered at <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safetybelt>

Source: e-FMCSA Safety Belt Program Update, January 2008

Work-Home

TRB Releases Guide to Help Reduce Crashes among Young Drivers

The Transportation Research Board released a report with strategies to reduce crashes involving young drivers. "Guidance for Implementation of the AASHTO Strategic Highway Safety Plan: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers" is one of several guides that will be available in the coming years to assist state and local agencies in reducing injuries and fatalities in targeted areas.



The guides correspond to the emphasis areas in the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Strategic Highway Safety Plan. They include an introduction, general description of the problem, strategies/countermeasures to address the problem and a model implementation process. For more information, go to

http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_rpt_500v19.pdf

TIRF to Develop Resource Center on Young Drivers

The Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) in Ottawa is currently developing a new comprehensive web-based resource center on young drivers that will be launched in early 2008. The Center will feature in-depth information on graduated driver licensing, driver education, other youth-oriented safety programs and data on young drivers. The Center will also include useful information on young drivers. For more information, visit www.trafficinjuryresearch.com

Make Plans Now for National Youth Traffic Safety Month

National Organizations for Youth Safety (NOYS) has once again designated May as National Youth Traffic Safety Month because it is an important time for teens to be focused on driving safety. To support National Youth Traffic Safety Month and as an incentive, Allstate Foundation is awarding \$1,000 to 50 local youth organizations for their youth-developed and implemented projects that demonstrate a strong focus geared towards youth traffic safety. With prom, graduation, and summer trips just ahead, youth-led teams can work together with Allstate Foundation and NOYS to decrease the number of traffic-related deaths and injuries that involve young drivers and passengers. For more information on how YOU can be involved, visit the NYTSM at <http://noys.org/YouthTrafSafe/toolkit.html>

International Traffic Safety News

Volvo Develops Three Crash-Avoidance Technologies

Volvo announced research and development progress on three of its new auto safety technologies, each in the prototype stage. Collision Warning with Auto Brake – Pedestrian uses radar technology to help detect pedestrians. A red warning light shows up on a display and a sound is emitted when the vehicle approaches a pedestrian. Collision Avoidance by Auto Steering uses radar and a camera to automatically steer the car away from potential crashes. Lastly, Vehicle to Vehicle Communication lets cars exchange warnings about hazards ahead on the road.

Drivers not Maintaining Personal Vehicles Used for Work

A survey found that almost two of every three of the 1-3 million personal vehicles driven for work were not safe to be on the road. Almost 60 percent of the vehicles were not properly maintained, and about a third weren't properly insured, according to the Total Motion vehicle monitor survey. Most of the maintenance problems were tire-related and could have been discovered during basic safety checks, which almost all of the drivers surveyed did not perform. "It is clear the safety issues raised by private cars being used for business are not being addressed," the managing director of Total Motion said.

Third of Grey Fleet Drivers Don't Get Proper Insurance Coverage

About a third of employees who lease their cars without maintenance cover for work use are not getting routine repairs. "If non-essential service and repair costs are not covered by the allowance, our evidence shows that cars are neglected," said Simon Hill of fleet consultant Total Motion, which conducted the survey. Drivers are tempted to take non-maintenance contracts when they're not



entitled to a company car, or they choose to opt out and take cash instead. A non-maintenance contract for a BMW 3 Series costs about the same as a Ford model with full maintenance cover. One industry expert says more-stringent checks or a move back to company cars are the only ways to solve the problem.

Source: FleetNews, January 10, 2008

Researchers Develop, Evaluate Test To Measure Attitudes toward Speeding

A recent study attempted to develop and evaluate a test that would measure attitudes about speeding without relying on a self-report. In the first study, 45 drivers completed a questionnaire that assessed self-reported attitudes toward speeding. Participants then used a driving simulator and completed the Implicit Association Test (IAT). The IAT results showed attitudes about speeding are negative and were consistent with the self-report and simulator results. Another 45 drivers completed the same tests and then returned after 1-2 weeks for a second session. The speed-related IAT appeared to be a valid and stable measure of attitudes toward speeding, so researchers might be able to use that instead of self-reports. For more information, go to

http://www.atsb.gov.au/publications/2007/Granr_Report200705.aspx

Employees Admit to Falling Asleep while Driving for Work

One in 10 employees who drive for work has fallen asleep behind the wheel during the past year, and 2 percent fell asleep three or more times. Road safety charity Brake and recovery firm Green Flag conducted the survey of nearly 5,000 drivers, half of whom drove for work. About six people die a week in crashes caused by tired drivers. "It's crucial that companies introduce thorough procedures to ensure employees are not endangering themselves and others when driving for work," said the head of campaigns for Brake. Half of employees who drive for work said they sometimes drive after less than five hours of sleep.

Source: FleetNews, January 10, 2008